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ABSTRACT

In accordance with the Treaty on European Union, the European Community (EC) has a supportive role to play for the Member States in the areas of education and vocational training. The free movement of persons, the right to establish a business, and the freedom to provide services are among the most important fundamental rights which apply throughout the community with the introduction of European integration. Vocational training has felt the impact of regulations and directives guaranteeing these rights and dealing with the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates, and other evidence of formal qualifications. The EC's Structural Fund can be used to support regions as they try to improve their locational disadvantages and link vocational training policy intervention more effectively to the social and labor market and industrial policy dimensions. The education and vocational training systems of the Member States face comparable challenges such as: a decline in the number of pupils and a working population which is too elderly as a result of demographic developments; steadily increasing demand for higher education and training; a tendency not to take an early decision on a choice of occupation so as to keep a broad field of options open; and rapidly changing occupational requirements. A wide range of programs launched by the EC support the Member States in their efforts to extend and renew their education and training systems. In its Guidelines for Community Action in the area of education and training, the EC Commission proposes the following: a network of promotion centers; support for innovations, transnational projects, and joint products; and a more active role in analysis and research. The issue of organizing and extending further and continuing education to enable all workers to engage in lifelong learning has played a central role in all opinions and resolutions of EC bodies. (YLB)

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Initial and continuing vocational training in Europe

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I. Legal foundations of the common education and vocational training policy

1. Competence of the European Union (EU) for education and vocational training

Once the Treaty on European Union[1] came into effect, it also clarified the legal foundation of the contribution of the EC and the European Union towards education (Art. 126) and vocational training (Art. 127). In accordance with these articles, the EC has an additional supplementary and supportive role to play for the Member States in these two fields, while not being able, however, to act in their place on the whole, e.g. by issuing laws of its own. Thus, the Member States continue to be independent when it comes to carrying out education and vocational training policies. They cannot be obliged to harmonize their legal or administrative regulations:

Paragraph 1 of Art. 127 reads: "The Community shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organization of vocational training."

Art. 189c lays down a procedure for decisions on EC measures, programmes and actions based on Art. 127 (vocational training). It is defined as follows:

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[1] Council of the European Community/Commission of the European Communities (pub.): Treaty on European Union, Brussels and Luxembourg 1992

"The Council, acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission and after obtaining the opinion of the European Parliament, shall adopt a common position." This will then be forwarded to the European Parliament with the necessary background material; the European Parliament has either to approve it or alter it within three months. Should the European Parliament not react, the Council will ultimately enact the respective legal act. If the European Parliament has rejected the common position, the Council may only pass the position in a second reading if the decision is unanimous. If the European Parliament has altered anything, the Commission will examine the proposal and comment on it. The Council may approve of these amendments or unanimously insert alterations on its own. If the Council cannot arrive at a unanimous decision within three months, the Commission's proposal is regarded as not accepted. The unanimity required in these cases is also deemed to have been achieved if members present in person or their representatives abstain from voting.

Thus, the procedure provides for a qualified majority at Council level for decisions on vocational training including continuing vocational training. The right of the Commission to make proposals plays a vital role in this context.

The procedure described in Art. 189b applies to decisions on educational issues (Art. 126). If there are differences of opinion between the Council and the European Parliament, an intermediary committee might be called on to intercede between the two bodies. The Commission also takes part in this committee but does not have the right to vote. A decision is

regarded as adopted if a qualified majority of the members of the Council and the majority of the members of Parliament have approved the decision.

In both procedures a qualified majority means that

a) the votes of the Member States shall be weighted as follows (see Art. 148):

- Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and Portugal	5 votes each
- Denmark and Ireland	3 votes each
- Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom	10 votes each
- Spain	8 votes
- Luxembourg	2 votes
Total	76 votes

and

b) At least 54 votes are required to pass a decision. In certain cases, at least 8 Member States have to agree to the decision. Accordingly, a qualified majority means de facto a two-thirds majority.

These procedures for passing decisions can result in a situation in the fields of education and vocational training that up to two of the larger Member States such as Germany and the United Kingdom might be outvoted.

There are three binding and two non-binding legal instruments that can be applied by the Council and the Commission under

Art. 189:

- the **Regulation**, which has general application, is binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States;

- the **Directive**, which is binding with regard to the result to be achieved but which leaves the choice of form and methods to the Members States and their competent authorities;

- the **Decision**, which is binding in its entirety upon those to whom it is addressed;

- **Recommendations** as well as **opinions** and **resolutions**, which have no binding force and are only an expression of the joint political will.

Instruments 3 and 4 are most frequently applied in the field of education and training. Regulations, however, play an important role in the field of Structural Funds, the harmonization of standards, environmental protection provisions and minimum social standards. They sometimes have a major impact on vocational training and on labour market policy in the Member States. We are familiar with directives particularly from the field of equal opportunities and from the non-discrimination legislation applying to women and from the field of recognition of vocational training qualifications (see below).

The fact that the Treaty on European Union comes into effect

from 1994 means that the areas of competence of the EC and the Member States have been interpreted in more detail. The state of jurisdiction and legislation achieved in 1993 will be fully retained, however, i.e. the "acquis communautaire" covers all acts passed to date; they will remain valid unless they are replaced by new acts of at least the same ranking.

2. Right to free movement of persons and services

The free movement of persons, the right to establish a business and the freedom to provide services are among the most important fundamental rights which apply throughout the Community with the introduction of European integration (see Art. 48 to 66 of the EC Treaty). To guarantee these rights quite a number of regulations, directives and decisions which have had and still have an impact on vocational training were issued prior to the European Single Market coming into effect at the beginning of 1993. They include the regulation on the freedom of movement of 1968[2], the regulation on pursuing an occupation as a self-employed person[3], the directive on

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[2] Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1612/68 on freedom of movement for workers within the Community in Official Journal No. L 257 of 19 October 1968 as amended by Regulation (EEC) No. 312/76 in Official Journal No. L 39 of 14 February 1976 and by Regulation (EEC) No. 2434/92 in Official Journal No. L 245 of 26 August 1992.

[3] See Council Directive 64/427/EEC laying down detailed provisions concerning transitional measures in respect of activities of self-employed persons in manufacturing and processing industries falling within ISIC Major Groups 23-40 (industry and small-

hairdressers[4] etc.

Regulations and directives issued by the Council from time to time as a result of Art. 57 on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications had similar, if not more far-reaching effects both on vocational training in the narrow sense, and on the education systems in general. In addition, the Council issued directives on the coordination of legal requirements and administrative regulations in the Member States with regard to the taking up and pursuit of self-employment.

Since the early 1960s, 13 directives have been issued in the areas of health-care and paramedical occupations, architecture and some typical freelance professions/occupations and the Member States have translated these directives into governing law. The directive on architecture from 1985 should be mentioned as an example here[5]. Since the adoption of these directives required unanimity, it took a long time before the

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craft industries) in Official Journal No. L 117 of 23 July 1964

4 Council Directive 82/489/EEC laying down measures to facilitate the effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services in hairdressing in Official Journal No. L 218 of 27 July 1982.

5 Council Directive 85/384/EEC on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in architecture, including measures to facilitate the effective exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services, in Official Journal No. L 223 of 21 August 1985.

directives were finally adopted; in the case of the architecture directive it took 17 years before the Council was able to put an end to the debate on the Commission's proposal, and adopt it.

New ground was broken in 1988 with the issue of the general regulation on higher-education diplomas facilitating access to the so-called regulated professions[6]. A high degree of mutual trust was relied on; the Member States refrained from setting minimum standards and recognized for the time being what was accepted in the relevant Member State.

The term "regulated profession" means that access to the profession is dependent on the completion of formal training regulated by the state or other admission requirements in the relevant Member State. EC nationals may not be refused access if they have completed education of at least 12 years' duration, acquired university entrance qualifications and completed at least three years of training at higher education level and obtained the relevant qualifications. The host Member State may, however, require "compensation" in instances where training takes one or more years longer than in the applicant's country of origin. This compensation may, for example, be an additional year of professional experience or the candidate may have to pass a special admission test. Such opening clauses do, however, revoke some of the mutual trust

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[6] Council Directive (89/48/EEC) on a general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years' duration in Official Journal No. L 19 of 24 January 1989.

on which the directive was based. This means that teachers and tax consultants, social education workers and judicial officers outside the regular judiciary sphere will continue to have trouble asserting their rights in individual cases.

In 1992, a second general regulation was passed concerning regulated professions under the higher education level, i.e. qualifications at upper secondary school education level and qualifications obtained after short training of one year or two years at higher education level[7].

This regulation covers technicians, assistant occupations and in certain cases also master craftsmen. The term "regulated profession" in this regulation limits the application to even fewer employment areas, e.g. health care, ocean shipping, the public service, than is the case with the first general regulation concerning higher-education diplomas unless the Member States were to include all "regulated training courses". The translation into governing law, which can be expected by mid-1994, will probably throw more light on this matter.

In order to help dependently employed persons assert their vocational qualifications with a view to their potential mobility, the Member States agreed in 1985 to the Council Decision on the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European

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[7] Council Directive (92/51/EEC) on a second general system for the recognition of professional education and training to supplement Directive 89/48/EEC, in Official Journal No. L 209 of 24 July 1992.

Community[8] on the basis of Art. 128 (EEC Treaty) and the general principles concerning a common vocational training policy of 1963. Under this Decision, the EC Commission and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, which was set up in 1975[9], were given the mandate, initially at the skilled blue- and white-collar worker level (see also the training-level structure in the annex to this Decision[10]), to select occupations and define the basic requirements for them corresponding to the diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in the Member States.

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[8] Council Decision (85/368/EEC) on the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community, in Official Journal No. L 199 of 31 July 1985.

[9] Founded by Regulation (EEC) No. 337/75 on the establishment of a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, in Official Journal No. L 39 of 13 February 1975.

[10] A distinction is made between five training levels, which may be used as a frame of reference for defining them in the Member States:
- Semi-skilled workers who receive short **introductory training** (level 1);
- The holder of qualifications at this level is fully qualified after having completed longer full-time or part-time training, including an **apprenticeship** (level 2);
- Technicians or other skilled blue or white-collar workers who obtain their qualifications through secondary schooling or comparable training (level 3);
- Higher-level technicians or assistents who attend a short training course at higher education level (level 4);
- Graduates of institutions of higher education who undergo lengthier training (level 5).

The comparability system is aimed at establishing more transparency in the training systems of the various countries and at providing a source of information for employees and employers. In 1993, 209 occupational profiles were unanimously agreed upon by the Member States in cooperation with the organizations of the social partners at EC level. Descriptions of the occupational profiles and comparative tables outlining training paths and qualifications have been published in the Official Journal of the EC in all 9 official languages.[11] The Member States are obliged within the

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[11] List of sectors/occupational groups, number of occupational profiles dealt with and publication of the comparative tables in the Official Journal of the EC.

framework of the comparability system to prepare information for interested skilled workers and employers and to forward such information to them on request. This service is provided by the competent authorities in the Member States. The

Sector/ Occupational group	No. of occupations jointly dealt with at EC level	Official Journal No.
Hotel/Catering industry (HORECA)	8	C 166 of 3.7.89
Motor vehicle repair sector	9	C 168 of 3.7.89
Construction	13	C 292 of 20.11.89
Electrical/ Electronics	10	C 321 of 22.12.89
Agriculture	26	C 83 of 2.4.90
Textile-clothing	9	C 253 of 8.10.90
Metalworking	20	C 196 of 25.7.91
Textile-industry	22	C 318 of 7.12.91
Commerce	6	C 42 of 17.2.92
Office/Administration including banking and insurance	6	C 108 of 28.4.92
Chemical	7	C 262 of 12.10.92
Food industry/Trades	12	C 292 of 9.11.92
Tourism	5	C 320 of 7.12.92
Transport	9	C 338 of 21.12.92
Public works/Civil engineering	11	C 20 of 25.1.93
Iron/Steel	5	C 182 of 5.7.93
Printing/Media	10	C 295 of 30.10.93
Leather	12	C 223 of 18.8.93
Wood	9	C 330 of 6.12.93
19 sectors and	209 occupations altogether	

vocational counselling offices at the labour exchanges are responsible for this service in Germany.

On the basis of several Council Resolutions on this subject[12], additional steps from the EC in the area of establishing transparency of qualifications may be expected in the near future. Currently, experiments are being carried out with regard to

a) a possible networking of existing and future databases in the field of qualifications and recognized training courses and
b) the introduction of a qualifications book and/or individual portfolios.

In this context it remains to be seen whether and to what extent the afore-mentioned Council Decision of 1985 on comparability will be replaced, amended or extended. The interests of the Member States and the social partners still differ so widely in this field that a fast and clear solution can hardly be reckoned with. The importance of this subject for the development of a European vocational training area is beyond question; all the parties involved are paying more and more attention to the matter. There is also an increasing amount of competition among the Member States about the best ways and means, from both the social and economic angles.

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[12] See Council Resolution of 18 December 1990 on the comparability of vocational training qualifications, in Official Journal No. C 109/1 of 24 April 1991 as well as the Council Resolution of 3 December 1991 on the transparency of qualifications in Offical Journal No. C 49 of 19 February 1993.

3. Vocational training as a complementary policy to the social and labour market policies of the European Community

In the past the vocational training policy of the EC was strongly shaped by the contribution it had to make to social and labour market policies in view of the economic and structural problems in some Member States, regions or the Community as a whole and in view of the problems faced by certain target groups. Vocational training policy served mainly as an instrument of social and economic intervention. Until 1993, prevention and medium- and long-term intervention often took secondary importance to short-term reactions to specific current problems.

To steer such intervention, the EC Commission has at its disposal the instrument of the Structural Fund, which in turn is divided into the Regional Fund, a Social Fund and an Agricultural Structure Fund.

The Regional Fund supports the development of a competitive infrastructure in the form of buildings, facilities, transport routes, etc. in particularly disadvantaged regions. The Social Fund is likewise active mainly in disadvantaged EC regions where it finances personnel and operating expenses, i.e. current expenses for training and continuing training, social and pedagogical supervision, rehabilitation, etc. while the Agricultural Structure Fund helps improve infrastructure in rural areas and it may also assume the current costs of retraining and further training. The financing of measures and programmes generally amounts to 50% of the total expenses;

the other half has to be borne by the Member State and/or regional or local authorities.

Since 1989, about 10% of the financing provided by the funds has been used for so-called **Community Initiatives**[13]. Special

[13] SURVEY: Community initiatives which have been financed from the Structural Funds since 1989

Acronym	**Complete Title**	**Duration**	**Funds provided (in million ECU)**
ENVIREG	Regional action programme on the initiative of the Commission concerning the environment	89-94	500
INTERREG	Communitiy initiative concerning border areas	89-94	800
RECHAR	Community initiative concerning the economic conversion of coal-mining areas	89-94	300
REGIS	Community initiatve concerning the most remote regions	89-94	200
STRIDE	Community initiative concerning regional capacities for research, technology and innovation	89-94	400
REGEN	Community initiative concerning energy networks	90-94	300

attention should be directed to the Community initiatives EUROFORM, NOW and HORIZON in the area of vocational training.

TELEMATI-QUE	Community initiative for regional development concerning services and networks related to data communication	90-94	200
PRISMA	Community initiative concerning the preparation of businesses for the Single Market	90-94	100
EUROFORM	Community initative concerning new qualifications, new skills and new employment opportunities	90-94	300
NOW	Community initiative to promote equal opportunities for women in the field of employment and vocational training	90-94	120
HORIZON	Community initiative concerning handicapped persons and certain other disadvantaged groups	90-94	180
LEADER	Links between actions for the development of the rural economy	90-94	400
		Total: ECU 3.8 billion (in prices of 1989)	

Source: Commission of the European Communities: The Future of Community Initiatives within the framework of the Structural Funds (Green Book), Brussels, 16 June 1993 (COM (93) 282 final).

Their main objective is "to add a Community dimension to vocational training and employment promotion. In so doing, the initiatives aim to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the Community, reinforce actions already taken in the framework of other Community programmes and in the field of training and socio-vocational rehabilitation, and complement employment promotion measures financed by the Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund. The initiatives promote the development of common concepts and practices among institutions and professionals in the field of vocational training and employment promotion. By facilitating the exchange of innovative experience, the initiatives promote the transfer of know-how to the less developed regions of the Community"[14].

In the coal and steel industry there is also the EC Committee on Coal and Steel, which has its own funds to finance the redeployment of the coal and steel industry and in this context also finances retraining and further training courses.

The Structural Funds were reformed in 1993. The Social Fund is important for vocational training; it has been given a stronger preventive bias in its social and labour market measures so that it can intervene more vehemently in industrial policy and fight more effectively against the exclusion of more and more groups of people and in particular against long-term unemployment.

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[14] See Green Book loc cit., Annex p. 30.

The reformed Social Fund has the task[15] of improving the efficiency of the labour market and developing human resources. Accordingly, the Fund supports **throughout the Community** "operations intended to facilitate the adaptation of workers of either sex, especially those threatened with unemployment, to industrial change and to changes in production systems in particular through a) the anticipation of labour market trends and vocational qualification requirements, b) vocational training and retraining, guidance and counselling, c) assistance for the improvement and development of appropriate training systems."

Measures are supported in certain **particularly disadvantaged regions**, which also include as of 1 January 1994 the five new Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany and the eastern part of Berlin to:

"a) strengthen and improve education and training systems, particularly through the training of teachers and instructors of either sex and administrative staff, by encouraging links between training centres or higher education establishments and enterprises and financing training within the national secondary or equivalent and higher education systems which has a clear link with the labour market, new technology or economic development;

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[15] See Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2084/93 of 20 July 1993 ammending Regulation (EEC) No. 4255/88 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No. 2052/88 with regard to the European Social Fund, in Offical Journal No. L 193, pp. 39 ff., of 31 July 1993.

b) contribute to develop through the training of public officials where this is necessary for the implementation of development and structural adjustment policies." [16]

These measures as well as measures in the more narrowly defined employment sector which are not explicitly mentioned here are intended to take account of the development, redeployment and structural adjustment goals in the relevant Member States and regions.

This makes it clear that in the future also, the EC will have the necessary ways and means at its disposal to support the Member States and regions effectively in their vocational training policies and supplement them, if necessary. With the reform of the Structural Funds, which was accompanied by a substantial increase in resources, for the first time ever it became possible for the EC - of course only in agreement with the competent authorities of the Member States and regions - to intervene in the field of full-time schooling and vocational training (initial training and continuing training including higher education) and to promote and further develop training systems, their organization and their expansion.

This is a new, additional dimension, opening up completely new possibilities especially for the disadvantaged regions of the EC. With the help of the EC, these regions can now try to improve their locational disadvantages and link vocational training policy intervention more effectively to the social

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[16] See Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2084/93, loc. cit., pp. 41 f.

and labour market and industrial policy dimensions. In this manner it might be possible in the medium- or long-term to replace the prevailing practice of doctoring the symptoms by introducing a truly preventive and foresighted labour market policy.

4. The role of the social partners in vocational training in the EC

The social partners are represented alongside government experts in the competent EC committees at the EC Commission (e.g. in the Social Fund Committee, in the Standing Committee on Employment Issues, in the Vocational Training Advisory Committee and in the Management Board of CEDEFOP). The fact that they are involved in the initial stages of decision-making is evidence enough that the EC has placed great value over the years on the inclusion of the trade unions and employer associations in vocational training.

This involvement was strengthened even further after the Treaties were revised in 1987 within the framework of the Single European Act and on the basis of the new Art. 189b, in which the promotion of the social dialogue was postulated. A number of joint opinions on questions concerning education and training, continuing training, qualifications and certification, and equal opportunities for women were passed by the three umbrella organizations of the social partners at EC level, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Centre of Public Enterprises (CEEP) and the Union of

Industries of the European Community (UNICE/CLE)[17]. These opinions helped the EC and the Member States to reach their decisions and were also taken into account in the work of the associations. A number of sectoral committees, e.g. in the textile industry, retail trade and the building industry, have likewise shown an interest in vocational training issues.

The Social Charter which was adopted in 1989 by the heads of government and state with the exception of the United Kingdom also includes a section on vocational training. It demands "the elimination of obstacles arising from the non-recognition of diplomas or equivalent occupational qualifications" and calls for better access to vocational training: "Every worker of the European Community must be able to have access to vocational training and to benefit therefrom throughout his working life. In the conditions governing access to such training there may be no discrimination on grounds of nationality. The competent public authorities, undertakings or the two sides of industry, each within their own sphere of competence, should set up continuing and permanent training systems enabling every person to undergo retraining more especially through leave for training purposes, to improve his skills or to acquire new skills, particularly in the light of technical developments."[18]

Starting from the need to implement this Charter, the

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17 Commission of the EC: European Social Dialogue, Joint Opinions, documentation series, n.p., n.d.

18 Commission of the European Communities: Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, Luxembourg 1990.

agreement on social policy was signed together with the Treaty on European Union in February 1992, once again with the United Kingdom abstaining. This agreement lays down in more detail the objectives and procedures to be followed in the social dialogue and in common social policy. Accordingly, the Community supports and complements the activities of the Member States, in the following fields among others: "Equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work" and in "the integration of persons excluded from the labour market without prejudice to Art. 127 of the Treaty establishing the European Community".

"To this end, the Council may ... adopt by means of directives minimum requirements for gradual implementation.[19]
In accordance with the above-mentioned process described in Art. 189 c of the Treaty, after hearing the Economic and Social Committee, the Council, with a qualified majority, can act, i.e. in such cases it can induce the Member States to harmonize their legal and administrative regulations to a certain extent and it can set minimum standards.

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[19] Agreement on social policy concluded between the Member States of the European Community with the exception of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in: "Treaty on European Union", loc. cit., pp. 197 ff.

II. Situation and prospects for vocational training in the 1990s

1. Central challenges

The education and vocational training systems of the Member States are all facing comparable challenges:

- Decline in the number of pupils and a working population which is too elderly as a result of demographic developments;

- Steadily increasing demand for higher education and training to secure the best possible starting chances when entering adult and working life;

- A tendency not to take an early decision on a choice of occupation so as to keep a broad field of options open for as long as possible;

- Growing importance of further and continuing training while previously acquired initial qualifications decrease in value;

- Ever more rapidly changing occupational requirements, devaluation of purely manual craft work, higher demands for language competence, specialized skills and knowledge and social competence which allow workers to behave and work independently, creatively, flexibly and enhance their willingness to adapt to contingencies;

- New requirements relating to
  a) the new information and communication technologies penetrating all occupations and activities; and
  b) an increased environmental awareness in all areas of work, coupled with energy and resource-saving behaviour.

2. The necessary updating of vocational training systems

There is general agreement about the objectives of a pending modernization of vocational training systems, although the starting position and the ways, or rather, the institutional requirements for this still differ greatly. The Commission underlined the following objectives in its Memorandum on Vocational Training in the European Community in the 1990s[20]:

- Maximum utilization of educational reserves while at the same time improving equal opportunities of the various target groups that differ in age, sex and origin;

- Providing **all** young people with high-quality vocational training that is recognized in the labour market and will allow them to become part of the working world and to take their place in professional and adult life;

- Further diversification and decentralization of the education and training courses on offer to guarantee

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[20] Commission of the European Communities: Commission Memorandum on Vocational Training in the European Community in the 1990s, COM (91) 397 final, Brussels 1991.

access to education and a profession/occupation while at the same time ensuring the comparability of general educational and vocational training qualifications;

- Organization and extension of a coherent and transparent continuing training system at all levels, in all regions and in all relevant economic, social, ecological and cultural areas of activity;

- Restructuring the relationship between general education and vocational training, e.g. through generalizing the alternate principle in education and (vocational) continuing training while at the same time facilitating access to continuing training for those members of the workforce who do not have or no longer have sufficient qualifications;

- Development of new types of qualifications and certification possibilities and their fast adoption as standard offers to enable individuals to take an active part in structural change;

- Opening institutions of higher education and universities to the workforce and eliminating privileged paths to senior positions in state and society.

3. EC Action Programmes and the way they work

A wide range of programmes launched by the EC in the 1980s support the Member States in their efforts to extend and renew

their education and training systems. They add a European dimension to them and foster the exchange of skilled workers and pupils, students and trainees between the Member States. They help in particular to promote further training in languages, the acquisition of overseas experience, the development of transnational projects and training partnerships as well as the exchange of experience on training for the purpose of introducing new technologies, etc.[21]

[21] **Educational and Training Programmes of the EC**

Acronym	Complete Title	Term	Operative budget up to 1992, in million ECU
COMETT	Programme on cooperation between universities and enterprises in the field of technology - Community Action Programme in Education and Training for Technology	1986-94	206.6
ERASMUS	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students	1987-	307.5
PETRA	Action Programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life	1988-94	79.7

Since the Action Programmes have the character of pilot projects and promote experimental and innovative projects, they supplement the assistance given to vocational education and training, further training and retraining through the Structural Funds which have far more financial resources at their disposal. Up until 1993, this aid was largely directed towards employment policy projects.

YOUTH FOR EUROPE	Action Programme promoting the exchange of young people in the Community	1988-94	32.2
IRIS	European Network of Training Projects for Women	1988-93	0.75
EUROTECNET	Community-wide network of demonstration projects in the field of New Information Technologies and Vocational Training	1990-94	7.0
LINGUA	Programme to promote foreign language skills in the European Community	1990-94	68.8
TEMPUS	Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Students	1990-94	194.0
FORCE	Community action programme for the development of continuing vocational training	1991-94	31.3

Source: Guidelines, loc. cit., Annex 1, Brussels 1993

Within the framework of the Community initiatives described above in Section I.3, the EC Social Fund has made its contribution towards cooperation between Member States and regions with different levels of development, e.g. in the area of promoting new types of qualifications, in vocational training and employment of women in areas of work that are more typically dominated by men and in the area of vocational training for the handicapped.

All the programmes mentioned here including the Community initiatives will expire at the end of 1994. The EC Commission intends to bundle them into two programme areas and coordinate them more efficiently with intervention within the work of the Structural Fund. One programme area would cover higher education and schooling or in other words, general education, and the other would take in vocational training and qualifications. A relevant communication of the Commission to the Council before the end of 1993 would in all likelihood result in a re-orientation of the programmes from 1995 onwards with the previous focal points being maintained. The skeleton programme for research and development focuses on the further and continuing training of skilled workers and scientists in this area as well.

4. Guidelines for the 1990s

In its Guidelines for Community Action in the area of

Education and Training[22], the EC Commission, newly appointed for 1993 and 1994, proposed a number of specific actions for the field of universities and tertiary education and schools as well as for the sphere of vocational training and continuing training. It wants to support **networks of promotion centres** at national, regional and local levels that deal with all types of vocational training, i.e. initial training as well as further and continuing training. "They would also represent the policies and practices for the development of measures to improve the matching of qualifications supply with labour market demand in relation to technological changes as well as for promoting transnational training partnerships"[23]

The Commission also intends to **support innovations, transnational projects and joint products** in the field of vocational training, and do this by means of
a) determining, pooling and disseminating innovations and bringing vocational training establishments and companies together in transnational partnerships;
b) planning and developing joint vocational training projects and compiling products which should be made available to all interested institutions and enterprises, e.g. methods, modules and materials and
c) supporting and assisting vocational training centres and enterprises implementing the projects into transnational

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[22] Commission of the EC: Guidelines for Community Action in the Field of Education and Training, Brussels, 5 May 1993 (COM (93) 183 final).

[23] Guidelines, loc. cit., p. 18.

partnerships.

Finally, the Commission wants to become more active in **analysis and research** than it has been in the past to improve mutual understanding of vocational training systems and mechanisms, to upgrade their quality and efficiency and to promote the exchange of information and data. The Luxembourg-based Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) and CEDEFOP will be involved for this purpose.

The work is intended to support in particular those Member States which are restructuring their vocational training and qualification systems as well as target-1 regions of the EC which are being specially promoted with the help of the Structural Funds and which have a greater need for consultancy work.

The intensified efforts in research are intended to produce materials for the **European Forum for Vocational Training**, which is to be held regularly. They should also facilitate the publication of the **European Vocational Training Report** to be issued every second year. The latter is to supplement the report of the EC Commission on the situation of employment.

5. Demands of the European Parliament

The European Parliament has dealt with the questions raised in the above-mentioned Memorandum of the Commission on the basis of a report about vocational training in the European Community in the 1990s compiled by its Committee on Social

Affairs, Employment and the Working Environment[24].

In its resolution of 21 April 1993[25], it demands in particular:

- that access to training be made available to all young people. It emphasizes the importance of a close connection between education, vocational training and the labour market at national, regional and local levels. When young people leave school, they should possess a sufficiently broad range of knowledge including in particular a basic knowledge of computers and foreign languages. Special emphasis is placed on guaranteeing equal opportunities to girls and young women and on offering vocational training courses that lead to recognized qualifications and include on-the-job training in an enterprise;

- that in the light of the technological and organizational changes, all workers be given access to continuing training. Further training for management, the training of trainers as well as the social dialogue should play a central role in this regard.

The quality of vocational training systems should be generally improved and adapted. In the above-mentioned resolution, the Parliament requests the EC Commission to devote greater

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[24] European Parliament: Report on the Vocational Training Policy of the European Community for the 1990s, written by Ms Mechthild von Alemann (PE 203.077/fin.) of 19 March 1993.

[25] Doc. 6001/93 PE-RESOL 23, p. 25.

attention to the problems of the weakest sections of society, among other things through the use of Community training initiatives for semi-skilled workers in particular; it also points out that access to vocational education and training is important for the assimilation of migrants in EC countries and therefore urges the Commission to promote and facilitate the development of measures to meet migrants' needs.

In matters concerning the transparency and comparability of vocational training qualifications, the Parliament underlines the importance of the mobility of skilled workers and the continuation of the work in this field for skilled workers, in particular in sectors with high geographical mobility. It attaches great importance to disseminating and exchanging information on national training systems. The network built up within the framework of the comparability system should be used in the future and extended further so that national vocational training qualifications become "marketable" at European level.

6. Concluding remarks: the necessity of life-long learning

The issue of organizing and extending further and continuing training for all members of the workforce to enable them to engage in life-long learning has played a central role in all opinions and resolutions of EC bodies and the social partners in recent years. Life-long learning is attributed as much importance as improving the general education and vocational training of young people. Thus, in its most recent resolution

of June 1993[26], the Council emphasizes the links between broad-based initial vocational training, further vocational training and other training offers designed to give employees the opportunity of continuing to train throughout their working lives. It also calls for the reduction of barriers to mobility and the maintenance of flexibility among the workforce, by means of broad-based efforts in the field of further and continuing training measures.

The Council thus seems to have adopted the position of the EC Commission which, for example, states in its guidelines: "Access to education and training over the whole of working life would mean more mastery over time, and opportunities to break out of the rigid education-work-retirement sequence in which people are still trapped. Such a strategy is essential to preserving and enhancing the vitality and originality of the European Community on the world stage."[27]

After lengthy discussions especially on the type of legal instrument, i.e. on the extent to which its own statements should be binding, the Council finally agreed to a recommendation "on access to continuing vocational training"[28]. It **recommends in Section I**: that Member States, while taking into account the resources available and the respective

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26 Resolution of the Council of 11 June 1993 on vocational education and training in the 1990s in: Official Journal No. C 186/3 of 8 July 1993.

27 Guidelines, loc. cit., Point 9.

28 Council Recommendation of 30 June 1993 on access to continuing vocational training (93/404/EEC) in: Official Journal No. L 181/37 of 23 July 1993.

responsibilities of the competent public authorities, enterprises and the social partners, and respecting the diversity of national legal systems and/or practices, formulate their vocational training policies to ensure that every worker in the Community has access to continuing vocational training without any form of discrimination and continues to have access to it throughout his or her working life.

Such formulations allow conclusions to be made about the commitment of those involved, i.e. in particular the governments of the Member States and the employer associations. However, the opinions and resolutions look rather non-committal when one considers the scarcity of the Member States' financial resources for training; the unequal distribution of the burden on the different groups of persons, companies, sectors and private households; the growing polarization, caused by an increasing trend towards continuing training, between those who have received a good level of school education and those who have never been able to obtain qualifications that are recognized in the labour market or who have become "dequalified" through repetitive work. If we do not succeed in providing the instruments for financing courses and training of the necessary personnel for further and continuing training, they will remain mere appeals and non-binding expressions of opinions. Even the considerable resources earmarked for the Action Programmes and the Structural Funds will not be able to change the essence of this situation. Political priorities have to be reflected in the national budgets and in the education budgets of the regional authorities. This is by no means guaranteed. On the

contrary, throughout the Community it is common practice to combat social problems and labour market problems rather short-term and to treat the symptoms rather than the disease. Labour market and social policies with a more preventive bias through funding of education and vocational training are fading into the background in view of the growing number of persons being excluded from training.

Levy funds, sector-specific financing possibilities and regional intervention mechanisms are urgently needed if the well-meaning intentions of those involved are to be put into practice in the Member States. In order to prevent competitive distortions, clear and binding principles on developing vocational training and its financing must be adhered to, at EC level as well.

Companies which invest little or nothing at all in the training of their employees must be called on more intensively to fulfil their duty than companies already investing in training just as they invest in machinery, technology or work organization. State authorities should induce the companies, by way of incentives and sanctions, to contribute so that the workforce has unqualified access to education and vocational training throughout their whole working life - a right that has been generally recognized in the Social Charter.

The possibility of "education rights" or "education and training vouchers", which was the subject of discussions in the 1970s, would help to enable the individual, after completing mandatory schooling, to engage for a certain number of years in education and training. Under such a system

unemployment insurance schemes could be gradually replaced by training insurance schemes. These in turn could constitute part of a more comprehensive system of basic social rights, burdening the social budgets of the Member States equally.

A change in the system of taxation in the direction of environmental, consumption and energy taxes with enterprises and employees paying far less taxes on wage and salaries could clear the road towards a training and continuing training insurance into which employees and employers would have to pay. Such changes to taxation systems are currently being discussed in a number of Member States. Labour-intensive enterprises with comparably high training costs would have to pay in less than capital-intensive enterprises consuming a high amount of natural resources, energy and non-renewable raw materials.

Foresighted vocational training and labour market policies with corresponding promotion instruments should be implemented at regional level in particular and related to specific economic and industrial sectors. At the same time, the increasing exclusion and marginalization of more and more groups of persons, including in particular foreign workers and ethnic minorities, have to be combatted and prevented. Investments in the modernization of vocational training at all training levels, the exhaustion of all potential through opening up access to higher-level schooling and training and to further and continuing training can make a necessary contribution to strengthening the competitiveness of enterprises and the European economy and industry as well as guaranteeing equal opportunities and permanently combatting

any exclusion of certain groups of persons.

Even though the general institutional conditions and forms of imparting knowledge as well as the institutions responsible for this will continue to vary, we can expect a certain harmonization in the objectives and standards of initial and continuing training, and as a result of this, a convergence in the systems. Even without a rigid harmonization of legal requirements and administrative regulations, increased competition between the systems might make the programmes more European, above all as a result of the accelerated exchange of information and experience on the different approaches and possibilities for solution. It remains to be seen, however, whether a European identity will emerge in this process. This might only be expected with closer political cooperation in the social, cultural and educational spheres. The continuing dominance of economic interests in educational and vocational training issues in the EC context jeopardizes a lasting cooperation and the development of a European educational and vocational training area since the accompanying protectionist tendencies and competitive advantages of individual regions and/or Member States often play too central a role.

Nevertheless, competition between systems has certainly to be welcomed, since it leads to an improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the training courses on offer in the Member States and in regions and branches that were previously disadvantaged. All Member States have the reform of vocational training on their agenda. All systems have to take up the new challenges. No system has a pilot character. The reform of vocational training has to be embedded in the

overall reform of education. Such a reform would remain incomplete if it did not include vocational training and continuing training.

The restructuring of the Action Programmes and the Community initiatives in education and vocational training which is planned for 1994 might well lead to an expansion in the activities of the EC and the Member States in all the areas of work covered up to now. It has, however, become necessary to rationalize these programmes and initiatives, to make them more effective and pinpoint them to really innovative and future-oriented areas. It must also be ensured that more people are able to benefit from the relevant training measures and that the experience and the results of the programmes are transferred, better and faster than in the past, to standard training courses under the education and vocational training systems of the Member States.

The European comparison of systems and cooperation among the authorities responsible for training and qualifications will remain difficult in the light of the expected expansion to include other Member States all with specific cultural and social approaches. Getting to know and learning about the cultural variety continues to be a laborious but also a very instructive and enriching process. It is the same with learning foreign languages: when we have learnt our first foreign language well enough to use it, we become keen to learn a second and a third language.

At the same time we realize that it is impossible to harmonize all the manifold systems and different cultures simply through

regulations. Mutual knowledge is the prerequisite for understanding and recognition. The process of adding a European dimension to education and vocational training can only be accelerated through increasing cooperation and a lasting exchange of experience and information. This process will help us approach common goals such as improving the quality of life, and living and working together in solidarity in a landscape and an environment that needs our protection. Cooperation in vocational training both in the European context and beyond can make a substantial contribution towards these goals.

CEDEFOP - European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Initial and continuing vocational training in Europe
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CEDEFOP Berlin

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This document is of a fundamental nature: it attempts to describe the legal and political situation of initial and continuing vocational training in Europe following adoption and at the time of ratification of the treaties on European Union (Maastricht Treaty). It provides expert discussion of a number of implications. On account of this CEDEFOP decided to make this available to an interested European public in several languages.

Paying due regard to the subsidiarity principle, the involvement of the European Union, which is already evident and expected to increase, and a number of fundamental challenges faced by vocational training at the beginning of the 90's have prompted the authors to describe the situation and to progress to making statements on the trends that would be desirable and which would respond to social, economic-technological and ecological challenges.

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